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ABSTRACT

Over a decade of research findings representing the work of more than 100 scholars are contained in the growing body of knowledge about effective schools. This report summarizes the results of studies that focus specifically on the characteristics of effective principals, classrooms, and teachers. The report also offers notes of caution to users of effective schools research. Research indicates that administrative leadership is characterized by principals who promote student cognitive growth, support improvement in teaching and learning, and provide a favorable climate for learning. Research on effective classrooms focuses on characteristic student behaviors and expectations, indications of student cognitive processing, and climate. Research on effective teachers focuses primarily on characteristics of classroom management and instruction. Two bibliographies make up the final two-thirds of the document. The first bibliography emphasizes effective schools studies that have important implications for state policymakers. The second bibliography emphasizes effective schools studies that have important implications for attacking political myths about teaching and factors other than money that motivate teachers. Citations in each bibliography are listed under the headings "Basic Research" and "Applied Research." (IW)

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•What Research Says About:

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Number 1

EA 018 836

Professional and Organizational Development/Research Division

Foreword

The WHAT RESEARCH SAYS ABOUT series introduces modified *DATA-SEARCH* reports geared toward providing concise reviews of the research on current topics in education. The reports will be particularly useful to association leaders as background material for decision making and planning. Each of the publications has been punched for a three-ring notebook. These booklets thus may be filed together for ready reference.

"Effective Schools," the first report in this series, discusses the characteristics of effective principals, effective classrooms, and effective teachers. National and state policy makers frequently are not aware of or ignore this research as proposals for reform of education are introduced. Association leaders should become familiar with the major results of the effective school studies, as they do provide guidance.

This report was prepared by Arthuryne Taylor and Barbara Valentine, with contributions from Margaret Jones.

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December 1985

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Number 1

The Context

State policy makers who are responsible for enacting educational reform legislation have largely overlooked the effective schools literature. But many elected leaders, staff, and members of the Association at all levels are using this rich resource to their advantage. Over a decade of research findings representing the work of more than 100 scholars are contained in the growing body of knowledge about effective schools. This information offers a persuasive and credible basis for constructively challenging the faulty assumptions made by some policy makers about the kinds of reforms that should be enacted. Much of the research can also be used to describe conditions that reform mandates should address in order for effective education to occur. Any reform that has the potential to hinder rather than promote effective education can and should be questioned. For purposes of analyzing how well educational reform proposals adhere to the best that is known from research into effective schools, the following generalizations are noted.

- Educational reforms that are mandated on a statewide base and that centralize control over education policies and practices at the state level ignore a basic tenet of the effective schools literature. The *school* is the unit where discretion in decision making is critical and where educational reforms — if they are to be effective — take place. Such changes occur in accordance with the goals, objectives, and needs of the personnel and students in a particular school. Therefore, local participation in planning and implementing reforms are key ingredients to success.
- Reforms that emphasize the roles of teachers to the exclusion of other important considerations are short-sighted. Effective schools underscore that education is a complex process that results from the collegial efforts of all school personnel working together. The staff maintains a network of mutually defined expectations, goals, policies and practices that are interrelated. This group participation process applies to any effective school, but the outcomes of the process are as unique as the personnel and students in a given school. Reforms that jeopardize cooperation and collegial efforts threaten the climate that should prevail in an effective school.
- In effective schools the principal behaves as an instructional leader who holds high expectations for staff and students; is knowledgeable about the substance and process of instruction; promotes shared leadership and decision-making, and acts as the coordinator of human and material resources required in effective schools. Reform proposals that ignore this role of the principal reflect a glaring omission.

Brief summaries of specific points that bring detail to these generalizations are presented in the next three sections of this report entitled:

- Characteristics of Effective Principals
- Characteristics of Effective Classrooms
- Characteristics of Effective Teachers

Finally, extensive bibliographies compiled by noted scholars are provided for those who wish to continue further study of the effective schools literature.

CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE PRINCIPALS

In many of the recent studies on "exemplary" and "successful" schools, the role of the building principal as a strong administrative leader and instructional manager emerged as a significant factor. Schools that were unusually successful, however, also had many other positive qualities and characteristics, but each of them had exceptional leadership. These studies emphasized that the direct responsibility for affecting the educational quality of effective schools resides with the principal who sets the tone. In other words, the successful schools in these studies give meaning to the old maxim: "effective principal, effective school". It must also be emphasized, that the overriding goal of these school programs was the success of every student and teacher. Moreover, the leadership style of the principal encourages shared leadership. S/he acknowledges that teachers can and should share the leadership role in instances where the teachers' expertise in a given area makes shared leadership appropriate and desirable.

The current educational reform movement highlights the need for principals to develop new and different leadership styles and skills in fulfilling their responsibilities to improve the education of all students in our public schools. These new demands require administrative skills not only in the area of resource management, but also skill as a leader in working with the community, staff, and students in identifying needs, goals and objectives; establishing high expectations; and developing, executing, and evaluating programs and personnel.

A review of research studies and literature on the traits associated with the effective principal reveal that strong administrative leadership is characterized by principals who do the following.

Promote Student Cognitive Growth

- Demonstrate a commitment to student achievement that is conveyed to both students and teachers
- Exhibit a commitment to ensuring that students can and will achieve at relatively high levels and assume responsibility for their attainment
- Emphasize student achievement in basic skills as the primary instructional goal of the school. This is reinforced by frequent evaluation of student progress
- Develop appropriate incentives and rewards for outstanding achievement that are structured to build persistence of effort and intrinsic motivation. The principal's expectations for student success permeate the entire school
- Emphasize student achievement as the primary outcome of schooling
- Involve parents more effectively in their children's learning

Support Improvement in Teaching and Learning

- Have knowledge and skills concerning effective teaching and curricular activities
- Buffer the classroom from internal and external disruptions and distractions
- Develop processes for staff involvement in planning, implementing and evaluating instructional programs
- Coordinate course content, sequence of objectives, and materials on all grade levels to ensure that what goes on in the classroom is commensurate with the overall goals and program of the school
- Provide regular administrative response to teacher difficulties, meaningful faculty meetings, opportunities for staff interaction on curriculum matters, and adequate inservice training that promotes improved teaching
- Regularly observe and formatively assess teacher performance to strengthen skill development; provide feedback promptly
- Become directly involved with careful teacher selection to ensure a "good fit" between teachers and students

- Acquire resources from many sources to ensure the effectiveness of instructional programs
- Work closely and regularly with teachers to identify classroom instructional priorities and means for their achievement
- Provide teachers with adequate planning time
- Provide teachers with professional development resources to evaluate instruction, as needed

Provide a Favorable Climate for Learning

- Do whatever is necessary to ensure that the school climate is conducive to learning: it is relatively orderly and quiet, well-maintained, and has a sense of purpose
- Coordinate the school functions as a coherent whole in accordance with agreed upon ways of doing things
- Set standards for discipline and apply them equitably and consistently
- Establish with teachers high standards for student behavior and achievement and convince students that they expect them to meet these standards
- Ensure that teachers and students have clear guidelines concerning the school's rules and policies regarding promotion, homework, absenteeism, tardiness, and grading
- Develop a school climate that is characterized by collegial, interactive relationships among the teaching staff and between the teachers and the principal

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CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE CLASSROOMS

For several years, the research on effective classrooms has centered on input to the classroom, e.g. teacher experience, students' general intelligence, and instructional resources. This recent decade has seen a shift from input analysis to the study of classroom processes which include: 1) teacher/student behaviors and expectations, 2) student cognitive processing, and 3) climate. The first process is self-explanatory whereas the second and third classroom processes need some definition.

Student cognitive processing relates to key dimensions of the educational process that are necessary for an effective transfer of learning. Some examples are teacher attention to student characteristics; teacher attention to content goals and to knowledge and skills assessed; amount of student engaged time; and student success.

Climate refers to the culture, norms, values, and attitudes embedded in a classroom in such a way as to permeate and positively influence student and teacher behavior.

Each of the above-mentioned classroom processes is comprised of various elements or characteristics. Highlighted below are the attendant characteristics found in the literature, with the exception of those related to teacher behaviors. Teacher behaviors are addressed in the next section of this report.

Student Behaviors/Expectations

Characterized by students who:

- Master the academic work
- Feel that the school helps them master the academic work
- Come prepared with materials for class
- Perceive congruence among the faculty in enforcing school rules and strictly controlling classroom behavior
- Believe that they can get ahead without someone or something stopping them
- Participate in leadership positions
- Accept the school's norms and values
- Approach staff members about personal problems
- Participate in charity organized by the school
- Feel that their efforts govern their future
- Engage in learning activities for an appropriate amount of time each school day
- Experience success in their learning activities at a moderate to high degree
- Expect to continue schooling
- Have a positive attitude toward their chances in life

Student Cognitive Processing

Characterized by:

- Recognition of differences in the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students bring to the classroom
- Recognition of varying student learning styles such as whether students proceed from whole to part, part to whole; number and type of senses used in gathering and processing information; the emotional involvement and structure preferred by learner
- Recognition of the need for congruence among content goals and objectives, actual content taught, and content tested by assessment instruments
- Recognition that students must be taught at least 60 percent of the content tested if they are to attain expected achievement levels
- Recognition of the need to maximize student engaged time on task
- Recognition of the need to ensure that allocated time varies in relation to time students need to learn
- Recognition that student success rate is one of the most important instructional process variables
- Recognition that errorless learning leads to optimal achievement

Climate

Characterized by:

- A positive climate and overall atmosphere
- A focus on acquisition of basic skills
- Shared consensus on values and goals
- Strategies to avoid non-promotion of students
- Stability and continuity of key staff
- De-emphasis of strict ability grouping; interaction with more accomplished peers
- Teacher empathy, rapport and personal interaction with students

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CHARACTERISTICS OF EFFECTIVE TEACHERS

The teacher is primarily responsible for developing a classroom climate that fosters improved student achievement. However, if teachers are to enhance optimal learning among their students, they need the necessary resources to fulfill their responsibilities. Much of the education reform literature ignores this fact. Instead it frequently focuses on characteristics of effective teachers summarized below under the major categories associated with teaching—'classroom management' and 'instruction'. These factors of course,only represent partial elements in the complex improvement process that involves coordination and management of instruction throughout the entire school.

Classroom Management

Characterized by teachers who:

- Start classes on time
- Discipline in such a way so as to indicate formal disapproval of misbehavior while avoiding humiliation and modeling violence
- Exhibit task focus, a sense of urgency, and a value for time
- Structure classroom environment to permit students to succeed
- Monitor classroom regularly — letting students know they are aware of what is happening at all times
- Ignore minor distractions and instances of inattention and deal with potentially serious disruptions early, but in ways that do not disrupt the flow of the lesson — through eye contact, movement through the classroom, or brief comments or questions to disruptive students
- Ensure the effective use of academic learning time (ALT), the amount of time a student spends engaged in a valued academic task he or she can perform with a high degree of success
- Keep students engaged in academic tasks and minimize time lost to disruptions, transitions, and other procedural tasks
- Monitor the classroom regularly, stationing themselves where they can see all the students
- Use well-organized and prepared lessons that let them move through instructional activities at a brisk pace
- Devote a good deal of time early in the school year to introducing rules and procedures concerning daily schedules, times of lunch and recess breaks, when and how to get materials, etc.
- Make the consequences of misbehavior clear in the beginning of the year, then consistently apply sanctions to misbehavior throughout the year
- Are held responsible for their performance, but not in a formal evaluative way
- Are well-trained in the use of supplemental staff

Instruction and Instruction-Related Domains

Characterized by teachers who:

- Interact with the class as a whole
- Assign homework frequently
- Praise students for work well done
- Indicate to students value for the school and the profession of teaching
- Provide awards for actual achievement
- Use probing questions and answers to enable them to correct students individually, particularly in the early stages of learning development
- Expect students to succeed
- Have a high sense of efficacy — belief that they are effective and can affect the learning of students
- Show concern for their students and treat them with respect and courtesy
- Cooperate among themselves and work with parents
- Engage in in-service activities
- Identify instructional resources and teaching activities, match to objectives and student developmental levels, and incorporate in lesson plans

- Relate current lesson to previous study and remind students of key concepts or skills previously covered
- Use assessment results not only to evaluate students but also for instructional diagnosis and to find out if teaching methods are working
- Review and adjust groups often, moving students when achievement levels change
- Pay attention to student interests, problems and accomplishments in social interactions both in and out of the classroom
- Help students get ready to learn, explaining lesson objectives in simple, everyday language and referring to them throughout lessons to maintain focus

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NOTES OF CAUTION TO USERS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS RESEARCH

Researchers such as Michael Cohen and Susan Rosenholtz who have synthesized and interpreted the findings of effective school literature offer the following cautions.

- Elementary schools have been the focus of the bulk of the effective schools investigations; generalizations to secondary schools are not yet possible
- Subject matter included in the studies has emphasized the teaching of reading and mathematics; generalizations to other curriculum areas should not be made
- These experimental studies are remarkably consistent in documenting associations between particular school characteristics and practices and increased student learning. However, these associations should not be interpreted as evidence of cause and effect relationships because of the wide number of variables involved in the research
- Cross-sectional rather than longitudinal designs are used in most of the studies and, therefore, the stability of school effectiveness over time has not yet been demonstrated
- Findings reveal that teaching skills in instruction and classroom management are the key determinants in effective teaching; less attention is given to the identification and study of subject matter expertise
- Repeated comparisons between extremely ineffective and highly effective schools neglect findings concerning "average" schools.

Despite the limitations of effective schools studies, the literature represents the best that is known from research on the subject.

NOTE TO USERS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS SUPPLEMENTARY BIBLIOGRAPHIES

For the benefit of those readers who desire an extensive source of references on effective schools, two special bibliographies are presented.

- The first bibliography compiled by Michael Cohen has a special emphasis on effective schools studies that were interpreted as having important implications for state policy makers.
- A second bibliography produced by Susan Rosenholtz emphasizes effective schools studies that have important implications for attacking political myths about teaching and factors other than money that motivate teachers.

The citations are listed under the headings — Basic Research and Applied Research. Basic research is pure research in that it represents a rigorous, structured type of analysis, employing sampling procedures for the purpose of producing new, cutting-edge theories. Applied research refers to studies that test theoretical concepts in actual problem situations. The distinction between the two types of research, however, is sometimes difficult to determine in the field of education. Thus, the bibliographies represent our best efforts in reordering the authors' original listing of citations.

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